

INTEGRATION—A RESPONSE TO GLOBALISATION

The emergence of various economic blocs across the globe is not mere coincidence, but a natural progression towards strengthening the ability of individual countries to use their collectivity to face the new era of international economic relations.

Smaller units operating on their own can no longer be viable counterweights in this rapidly changing world. Based on this recognition, we in this hemisphere have not shied away from the inevitable and we see the integration movement as our best response to the challenges we face. The establishment of CARICOM, MERCOSUR, THE Andean Group et al, are therefore regional "lifelines" cast upon the turbulent waters of globalisation.

Let me share briefly with you, some of the challenges we face in the Caribbean. We have been seriously affected by the EU's stipulation as it relates to bananas and sugar.

In the case of the former, we have expressed the importance of the higher tariff of Euro 275/t to ensure adequate protection is in place for our farmers.

For sugar, the proposed cut of some 39% is a grave concern for us, as is the proposed timetable for implementation over a four-year period.

In 2004 damage from Hurricane Dennis totalled some US\$40million. The impact was much greater in 2005, with more hurricanes affecting the agricultural and tourism sectors, and even more horrible damage to our infrastructure.

Through these illustrations, which in some cases may be magnified based on the country in the region you choose, I proffer today, that our solutions for the various sub-regions we represent and by extension, the hemisphere, cannot be simple, unilateral or implemented overnight.

CARICOM formally launched the Single Market just over a month ago and we hope to move towards the Single Economy by 2008, as we had envisaged in the Grand Anse Declaration of 1989 in Grenada.

We have, through the methodical, comprehensive and measured approach, taken the necessary steps to ensure that our *modus operandi*, carries with it the philosophy, that no country will be left behind. For this reason, we in CARICOM have been careful to elaborate plans for a Regional Development Fund to assist in the adjustment period. We also fervently believe that at the hemispheric level, no country should be left behind.

Over the years and even now, we have put in place a number of other institutional arrangements that seek to ensure a structured operation through which we hope any future transition can be seamless and effective. CARICOM Heads entertain no misconceptions of the challenges we face. If we are to effectively deliver on the objectives in our revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, we must take some bold steps and remain unwavering in the commitment to achieve the targets.

The moment has arrived for us to now seek solid bipartisan commitment to national and regional goals, which will then translate into full integration into other institutional arrangements. The strength of governance will only be enhanced when we are able to replace the retracing of steps by different administrations, with a brisk walk forward towards our common goals.

Education must be an engine driving growth and pushing development. The technology-driven world we live in today demands knowledge, skills, research and solutions, and a thirst for answers by our youth. We must facilitate that process at all levels to ensure that progression from one level to the other, from one discipline to the next,

takes place consistently. If we are to achieve these objectives as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals, the Charters of the Organization and the Strategic Plan, we must act now on this other pillar of development.

Justice and the rule of law in all its forms, at all levels, must exist without compromise or prejudice. We have to exercise the will to maintain law and order, not merely through the imposition of penalties but through the encouragement of a sense of just, law-abiding and ordered behaviour by all our citizens. Too much of our resources are being spent on managing conflict and security and therefore preventing us from providing more, as opposed to securing less, as we do now.

Sometimes when we seek to solve larger problems, such as the challenges to globalisation, we over-think and over-analyse them and by-pass the adherence to the fundamentals. We must always be mindful of the basic elements, the smallest cogs in the wheels, the importance of measurements.

Let me now address an issue which is very close to my heart. The conduct of international and institutional relations can only be improved when we allow principle, integrity, honour and justice to prevail. The people we lead and the interests we serve are looking to us to provide enlightened and inspired leadership. That expectation becomes magnified with every decision we are called upon to take, because we are more interdependent than we have ever been before.

Security, health and environment issues remind us daily of our own vulnerability as individuals and countries and behave us to be mindful of these concerns at all levels. The recent outrage in the Muslim world recalls for us the far-reaching effect of our actions and by extension our own intolerances. We must guard against these inclinations.

Inclusion and inclusiveness must be one of the principles which we use to dovetail our own actions and create what I would call concentric circles of goodwill. The old adage holds true today that "we will reap what we sow". Let us be mindful of the seeds we put down today, to avoid reaping bitter fruits in the future.

Sixty years after its creation, the OAS is summoned to face bold new challenges which confront our entire Hemisphere. In order to adequately respond, the modality by which it operates must change. It must avoid sterile debate and become an instrument of positive change.

This requires that it become an effective Institution for decision-making at the highest political and economic levels. This must be your quest for the decade ahead.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has indeed been a pleasure for me to address you today; to share my thoughts and to issue a charge and a challenge to you all. As life and experience have taught me, the process of learning never ends. As we learn we must impart, for in the words of Khalil Gibran—"to withhold is to die". We have a tremendous responsibility to make the world safer and better, for those who have placed their confidence in us. We have many opportunities to do so everyday by our own conduct and leadership. Let us not deny ourselves a Hemisphere of social justice where peace, prosperity and harmony will prevail.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MAIN
TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL'S WE
THE PEOPLE: THE CITIZEN AND
THE CONSTITUTION PROGRAM

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Ms. SCHAKOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, from April 29–May 1, 2006, approximately 1,200 students from across the country will visit Washington, D.C., to take part in the national finals of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, the most extensive educational program in the country developed specifically to educate young people about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. The We the People program is administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress.

I am proud to announce that a team from Maine Township High School, located in my Congressional district, will represent the State of Illinois in this prestigious national event. These outstanding students, through their knowledge of the Constitution, won their statewide competition and earned the chance to come to our nation's capital and compete at the national level.

While in Washington, the students will participate in a 3-day academic competition that simulates a congressional hearing in which they "testify" before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles as they evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.

We the People students display great political tolerance and commitment to the principles and values of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. With many reports and surveys indicating the lack of civic knowledge and civic participation, I am pleased to support such a superb program that is producing an engaged citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, the names of the outstanding students from Maine Township who will be participating in the national finals are:

Lauren Allegritti, Cailin Bake, Katy Bratko, J.P. Carolan, Liz Chao, Rebecca Christopher, George Gianakakos, Melissa Hansen, Katherine Hapeman, Andrew Juiris, Natalie Kociubinski, David Krone, Chris Lenzini, Matt Lenzini, Meghan Machon, Meghan McKelvey, Christine Recsetar, Pat Rhine, Mike Ross, Janelle Santos, Christina Solari, Amanda Swanson, Bill Warnock, and Mary Yu.

I also wish to commend their teacher, Andrew Trenkle, who is responsible for preparing these young constitutional experts for the national finals. Also worthy of special recognition is Patton Feichter, the state coordinator, and John Heuman, the district coordinator, who are among those responsible for implementing the We the People program in my district.

I wish these students much success as they prepare to compete at the We the People national finals, and I applaud their outstanding achievement.